

COMMISSION ON JUDICIAL PERFORMANCE
455 Golden Gate Avenue, Suite 14400
San Francisco, CA 94102

Contact: Victoria B. Henley
Director-Chief Counsel
(415) 557-1200

FOR RELEASE
April 12, 2010

JUDICIAL PERFORMANCE COMMISSION ISSUES
PUBLIC ADMONISHMENT OF JUDGE ANTHONY C. EDWARDS

The Commission on Judicial Performance has publicly admonished Judge Anthony C. Edwards of the Trinity County Superior Court.

After disqualifying himself based on a close personal relationship with Corrie Floris and her family, Judge Edwards presided over Floris's felony arraignment. During the arraignment, Judge Edwards made inquiries of his wife, an attorney, who was present with Floris and who asked Judge Edwards to appoint a public defender to represent Floris. As Judge Edwards left the courtroom after the arraignment, he walked by the jury box where Floris and other in-custody defendants were sitting and hugged Floris. The commission rejected Judge Edwards's argument that he was authorized to conduct the arraignment despite his disqualification because the only other judge in Trinity County was also disqualified. Even if a visiting judge was not available to arraign Floris within the time prescribed by law, the court would not have lost jurisdiction. Further, hugging Floris in open court created the appearance of bias and otherwise created the appearance of impropriety.

Around noon on a Friday afternoon, Judge Edwards took his clerk and deputy marshall to lunch in his plane. They did not return until approximately 2:45 p.m. to 3:00 p.m., even though the clerk was expected back in court at 1:00 p.m., and Judge Edwards had matters calendared at 1:30 p.m. Judge Edwards later reprimanded the Court Executive Officer (CEO) for speaking with the clerk about her absence and directed the CEO to remove any mention of the incident from the clerk's personnel file and to pay the clerk overtime for keeping her after hours to speak about the incident. The commission concluded that Judge Edwards's conduct reflected a disregard of the court's obligation to the public, undermined confidence in the integrity of the judiciary, and created an appearance of favoritism.

In a misdemeanor matter, Judge Edwards scheduled an arraignment before himself despite his recusal under circumstances that gave an appearance of preferential treatment to the defendant. Judge Edwards also engaged in misconduct by dismissing certain infractions and misdemeanors without legal authority because the defendants were cited to appear in Weaverville when they lived in Hayfork.

Judge Edwards created an appearance of bias when he commented in a crowded courtroom that a certain misdemeanor “was just another example of the DA overcharging.” In another matter, Judge Edwards failed to maintain decorum in the courtroom by failing to ask a potential juror, whom he knew personally, to remove a tinfoil hat worn as a joke during court proceedings.

In California, judicial officers are expected to decide cases within 90 days of the date they are taken under submission. Between 2005 and 2008, Judge Edwards failed to decide at least four matters within 90 days of submission.

The commission determined that the conduct of Judge Edwards in these matters was, at minimum, improper action warranting a public admonishment.

The public admonishment is available on the commission’s Web site at www.cjp.ca.gov (under “Press Releases” and “Public Discipline – 1960 to Present”) and from the commission’s office.

* * *

The commission is composed of three judges, two lawyers, and six public members. The Chairperson is the Hon. Judith D. McConnell of the Court of Appeal, Fourth Appellate District, in San Diego, California.

For further information about the Commission on Judicial Performance, see the commission’s Web site.